

**Statement of  
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding the security of America's transit systems and in particular the critical role of training and emergency preparedness.

We are all dismayed by the tragic and despicable acts of violence in London on July 7 and July 21. Our hearts go out to the victims, their families, and their countrymen who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with America in the wake of September 11. July 7 was a grim reminder of how difficult it is to balance economic prosperity, freedoms, and security.

Mass transit systems are essential to the freedom of movement that Americans cherish and enjoy. They permit large numbers of people to travel rapidly and efficiently between home, work, and other activities on a daily basis. To do that effectively, transit must be open and accessible.

Every workday, transit and commuter rail systems move more than 14 million passengers in the United States. In two weeks, transit and commuter rail systems carry more passengers than Amtrak carries in a year. In a single month, transit and commuter rail systems carry more passengers than U.S. airlines carry in a year.

- On a daily basis, 700,000 to 800,000 people take the Long Island Rail Road, Amtrak, NJTransit, and the New York City subways into Penn Station, and a similar number use Metro North Railroad and the New York City subway through Grand Central Terminal.
- Prior to their destruction on September 11, the World Trade Center and Fulton Street subway stations handled over 380,000 people each day -- the equivalent of the entire population of Miami, Sacramento, or Pittsburgh.
- In 2004, 251 million trips were taken on Washington DC's Metrorail.

The very characteristics of public transit systems that make them convenient and reliable, also make providing effective security an ongoing challenge. Each year, more than 2.7 billion passengers use over 1,000 stations to access America's heavy rail stations. Although passenger

screening devices similar to those used in airports have been successfully tested in locations with limited access points and relatively few passengers, the widespread application of current passenger screening devices on mass transit – even on heavy rail – is unrealistic. During peak periods in New York’s Penn Station, for example, more than 1,500 people per minute would have to be screened to maintain current levels of mobility and access. Therefore, even as we continue to improve the security of our Nation’s transit systems, we must not lose sight of the need to improve our ability to respond to emergencies in order to save lives and minimize injuries.

## **FTA and America’s Transit Systems**

America’s public transportation is provided by more than 6,000 locally governed and operated transit systems. These systems range from very small bus-only operations in small and rural communities, to very large multi-modal systems in urban areas that may combine bus, light rail, subway, and commuter rail operations.

The Federal Transit Administration provides capital funding to States and urbanized areas to develop new and extensions to existing public transportation systems, and to improve and maintain existing systems. Smaller urbanized areas with less than 200,000 population, may use FTA formula funds for limited support of their operations. However, FTA does not have regulatory authority over the day-to-day operations of transit agencies.

Historically, FTA has shaped the practices of transit agencies through its training programs, the development of best practices and guidance, and by conducting research that is critical to the industry. Since September 11, we have used all of these techniques to significantly influence the security practices of transit agencies.

## **Response to September 11**

Immediately following September 11, 2001, FTA undertook an aggressive nationwide security program and led the initial Federal effort on transit security. With the creation of the Transportation Security Administration in 2001 and the Department of Homeland Security in 2003, lead responsibility for the Federal Government’s activities in the area of public transit security now rests by statute with DHS. DOT recognizes that DHS has primary responsibility for transportation security, and that DOT plays a supporting role, providing technical assistance and assisting DHS when possible with implementation of its security policies, as allowed by DOT statutory authority and available resources. While TSA is the lead federal agency for ensuring the security of all transportation modes, as part of its own authority, FTA conducts non-regulatory safety and security activities, including safety and security related training, research, and demonstration projects.

With the assistance of national and international security experts, FTA identified and has focused on three important priorities: employee training, public awareness, and emergency preparedness, and we continue to work with our DHS partners in all of these areas.

FTA's initial response included conducting threat and vulnerability assessments in 37 large transit systems, 30 of which carry almost 90 percent of all transit riders. These assessments, conducted with the full cooperation and support of every transit agency involved and at no cost to the transit agencies, formed the basis of our security efforts. The assessments considered the entire transportation system and network in each area, not just the physical assets of one mode or site. Each assessment identified high risk and high consequence assets; evaluated security gaps; made recommendations to reduce security risks to acceptable levels; educated transit agencies on threat and vulnerability analysis; and reviewed agencies' emergency response plans, particularly their degree of coordination with emergency responders throughout the region.

Based on these assessments, FTA sent technical assistance teams to 46 transit agencies, and will begin four additional technical assistance visits in the next few months. These teams help transit agencies strengthen their security and emergency preparedness plans; implement immediate operational security improvements; and offer tailored assistance based on threat assessments. The results have also been utilized by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to assess the relative risks and requirements in the transit environment. Further, as part of a \$3 million program involving 83 transit agencies, FTA funded emergency response drills conducted in conjunction with local fire, police, and other emergency responders.

In 2002, to help guide transit agency priorities, FTA issued its Top 20 Security Action Item List to improve transit safety and security operations, particularly with regard to employee training, public awareness, and emergency preparedness. Since that time, the implementation of these action items by the 30 largest transit agencies has been one of four core accountabilities of every FTA senior executive, and I am pleased to report that FTA has achieved its goals in this area every year.

In addition, to address concerns identified through its threat and vulnerability assessments, FTA developed and disseminated standard protocols for responding to chemical or biological incidents in rail tunnels and transit vehicle environments. More recently, FTA has developed Security Design Considerations for use by transit agencies as they design or redesign infrastructure, communications, access control systems, and other transit system components. Important considerations include designing stations for easy detection, so people cannot leave objects hidden out of sight; separating public and private spaces in facilities, so that access to controls and equipment can be restricted; and designing facilities for easy decontamination and recovery operations. FTA is incorporating security design as a component of the New Starts development and evaluation process.

Since 9/11, FTA has also significantly improved its ability to communicate with transit agencies. We now utilize a voice system known as Dialogics to communicate security messages verbally to the general managers and security chiefs at the 30 largest transit agencies. This system, which requires an affirmative acknowledgement that the message has been received, has been utilized extensively by both DHS and FTA in recent weeks. In addition, we maintain and utilize the capability to communicate electronically with the general managers and security chiefs of the 100 largest transit agencies.

We recognize that good intelligence must be America's first line of defense against terrorism, and FTA has worked diligently with our partners to improve intelligence sharing in the transit industry. FTA funded and worked with the American Public Transportation Association to create the Surface Transportation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ST-ISAC), which is used by transit agencies throughout the country to obtain and share intelligence information that is specific to the industry. This system provides two-way communication between the intelligence community and the transit industry, as well as transit-specific intelligence analysis. The ST-ISAC is located at the Transportation Security Operations Center, TSA's 24/7 communications center that provides real time data on potential threats throughout all modes of transportation. In addition, FTA worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to enable transit agencies to participate on their local or regional FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), giving nearly all of the 30 largest transit agencies access to real-time intelligence information regarding their community and the ability to contribute information they may have regarding threats to their own operations.

### **Response to London Attacks**

In response to the London terror attacks, transit agencies across the country implemented "Orange Alert" protective measures, even before the threat level was officially raised. This quick response was a direct result of the extensive work done in identifying best practices, developing security-related guidance, and working collaboratively to plan and test emergency response procedures.

Among the specific protective measures implemented by the 30 largest transit agencies immediately following the London attacks were:

- Deployment of bomb-sniffing dogs to patrol transit stations;
- More frequent reminders to passengers about how to identify and report suspicious activities and behaviors;
- Deployment of transit police to the local police department command center; and
- Deployment of additional transit agency staff and law enforcement personnel to increase patrols and visibility in public areas.

In addition, I am pleased to report that DHS and FTA worked cooperatively for the benefit and safety of transit riders across the Nation. FTA provided input to DHS in the development of a DHS/FBI Joint Advisory regarding recommended measures for mass transit and passenger rail systems. DHS and FTA also consulted on the alert timing, level, and actions; utilized shared communication systems to reach out immediately to our transit agency partners; and met jointly with transit agency leaders via teleconference.

As you know, the prevention of attacks like those in London will be grounded in useful intelligence that is promptly shared with local officials. Unfortunately, little intelligence was available prior to those attacks.

Although opportunities to improve U.S. transit system security still exist, we know that capital expenditures alone are not enough to assure security. Perimeter fencing, securing yards, tunnels, and bridges, facial recognition technology, and even extensive use of security cameras did not and would not have prevented either the London or Madrid attacks.

The fact is, good transit security is grounded in operations. Reports from both Madrid and London confirm that our focus on public awareness, employee training, and emergency preparedness is well-founded. In light of that knowledge, I would like to share some additional information about our efforts in these three areas, and our plans for the coming year.

## **Public Awareness**

Originally, many people were concerned that efforts to share security-related information with the riding public would generate fear and depress ridership. As a result, early efforts to increase public awareness, including FTA's Transit Watch campaign materials, were general in nature, telling passengers to be on the look-out for suspicious individuals or activities. Over time, however, experience and research have indicated that people feel more secure and are more capable of responding if they receive more specific security-related information.

As a result, transit agencies now focus their public awareness efforts on the specific actions that passengers should take. For example, one widely used public education campaign, originally developed by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, instructs passengers to ask, "Is That Your Bag?" if they see an unattended bag or package. Another campaign, using the tag line "See Something, Say Something," tells passengers how to contact transit officials if they see something that seems out-of-place. Public awareness campaigns have also begun to focus more specifically on emergency evacuation procedures.

Since September 11, the use and effectiveness of public awareness messages has significantly increased. Washington Metro has been a leader in ensuring that detailed emergency evacuation information is more widely and openly disseminated to transit riders and the general public. Nevertheless, in most transit systems, there is still room for improvement to ensure that the public is familiar with the operation of emergency exit doors, understands the emergency evacuation procedures for each location on their particular route, and is prepared to facilitate a prompt and effective emergency response.

FTA will be focusing efforts to improve standard public awareness templates to help local transit agencies incorporate this important information. In addition, FTA is developing standard protocols for the content and frequency of security announcements for each Homeland Security threat level. Further, security and emergency preparedness messages are being developed in a variety of languages in an effort to better communicate with the diverse community of transit riders.

## **Employee Training**

Transit employees are America's first line of defense and will be our first responders in the event of a terrorist attack or other emergency on a transit system. The actions taken in the critical moments immediately after an attack or an emergency can significantly reduce the severity of injuries and the number of deaths that result. Therefore, there is simply no substitute for security awareness and emergency response training for transit employees. We must rely on – and cultivate – human capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to security threats.

The 400,000-plus transit employees throughout America are the “eyes and ears” of our most important security system. Transit employees travel the same routes, maintain the same facilities, and see the same people every day as they go about their duties. They are in the best position to identify unusual packages, suspicious substances, and people who are acting suspiciously. But they need to develop an understanding of what to look for and skills in how to respond. These skills can be acquired through rigorous emergency planning, regular emergency testing and drills, and extensive training.

FTA has developed and delivered guidance and security courses through the National Transit Institute (NTI), the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) and Johns Hopkins University (JHU). Since September 11, over 77,000 transit agency employees from across the Nation have received security-related training. Among the newest training courses now being offered are:

- **Terrorist Activity Recognition and Reaction.** This course incorporates the latest in international counter-terrorism techniques to provide training to frontline transit employees. To date, over 4,200 transit employees from 28 of the 30 largest transit agencies have taken this training.
- **Strategic Counter-Terrorism for Transit Managers.** This course provides counter-terrorism management training to transit managers and transit security officials. It offers an effective approach to security planning and the tactical deployment of law enforcement personnel. The course will be delivered to the 30 largest transit agencies beginning in August 2005.
- **Chemical/Biological Detection Protocols.** This course will provide agency-specific information for operations control personnel and train operators on chemical and biological incident management. The course is also slated for delivery to the 30 largest transit agencies beginning in August 2005.

Despite widespread success and the significant numbers of transit agency employees who have received training, we recognize that hurdles, such as overtime costs and shift coverage, can negatively affect the ability of transit agencies to take advantage of the free training opportunities that are available through FTA. Therefore, we are working with transit stakeholders to identify strategies that will permit as many frontline employees as possible to be trained.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

While transit employee training is important, there is no substitute for a good emergency response plan that has been tried and tested by the full array of emergency responders in a

community. However, the threat and vulnerability assessments conducted after September 11 suggested that most transit agencies had not even established working relationships with other emergency responders.

To assist in building these relationships and developing community-wide response plans, FTA sponsored 18 Connecting Community Forums. These forums brought together transit, law enforcement, fire, medical, and city/county officials for three days of regional planning and response exercises. FTA will work with DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness and Transportation Security Administration to hold ten additional Connecting Community Forums in the coming year that are customized to address weaknesses in those particular communities. Two of the forums will be held in conjunction with small and/or rural transit agencies.

To date, 77 communities have conducted full-scale emergency response drills funded by FTA. One important condition of these grants was that the drills include the participation of local and regional police, fire and emergency response agencies. There is no doubt that the safety and security of our communities is significantly enhanced when public transportation systems are linked to police, fire, medical and other emergency response agencies. Community-wide planning, emergency response drills, and unified emergency command centers make this critical link effective. FTA is currently updating its guidance on how to conduct emergency drills based on the results of the drills held to date. In addition, we plan to provide additional grants to transit agencies to conduct full-scale drills.

While we continue to believe that there is no substitute for practicing emergency response skills in an operating environment, we continue to look for ways to improve and practice skills more frequently and at a lower cost than full-scale community drills. Therefore, FTA has also piloted web-based emergency drills in Boston (MBTA), Portland (Tri-Met), Seattle (Sound Transit), San Francisco (BART), Rock Island, IL (Metrolink), and Montgomery County, MD (Ride On). This approach will provide transit agencies, particularly small and rural agencies, with a tool for conducting tabletop drills more effectively, efficiently, and affordably.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, the Nation's transit operators have responded admirably to the new threat environment. Thanks to their efforts, transit is more secure and more prepared to respond to emergencies than it has ever been. FTA will continue to support transit agencies throughout the Nation by providing security-related training for transit employees, materials and guidance to educate transit passengers, and improved emergency response planning and procedures.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this important update on transit safety and security, and look forward to working with you to keep Americans safe and moving on public transportation.